

# CIA OPERATIONS CENTER

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CIA-WALTERS (TOPS PREVIOUS)

BY FRANCES LEWINE

WASHINGTON (CBP) -- LT. GEN. VERNON WALTERS, A NIXON APPOINTEE TO THE CIA WHO FIGURED IN THE WATERGATE HEARINGS AND DEFENDED THE AGENCY DURING RECENT INVESTIGATIONS INTO ITS ACTIVITIES, IS QUITTING HIS JOB AS DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE CIA, IT WAS ANNOUNCED TODAY.

THE WHITE HOUSE ANNOUNCEMENT SAID WALTERS WILL BE SUCCEDED BY A CIVILIAN, ASSOCIATE DEPUTY DIRECTOR E. HENRY KNOCH. PRESS SECRETARY RON WESSEN SAID KNOCH WAS CHOSEN BY CIA DIRECTOR GEORGE BUSH, WHO WANTS "TO BUILD HIS OWN TERM."

WALTERS WAS SAID TO BE OUT OF TOWN AND UNAVAILABLE FOR COMMENT. WESSEN SAID WALTERS SUBMITTED HIS RESIGNATION LAST JANUARY AFTER PRESIDENT FORD WARNED BUSH TO HEAD THE CIA. WESSEN SAID WALTERS DECLARED HIMSELF "OVERDUE TO GET OUT OF THE ARMY" AND RECOGNIZED THAT BUSH WOULD WANT TO PICK HIS OWN CIA TERM.

BUSH DID NOT ACCEPT WALTERS' RESIGNATION IMMEDIATELY; WESSEN SAID. NOW, HOWEVER, WALTERS' LETTER OF RESIGNATION HAS BEEN FORWARDED TO FORD AND THE PRESIDENT IS RESPONDING TO IT. THE PRESS SECRETARY SAID. WESSEN SAID WALTERS' RETIREMENT DATE FROM THE ARMY HAS BEEN SET FOR JUNE 30.

WESSEN SAID FORD PLACES A VERY HIGH REGARD FOR WALTERS AND THE WORK HE HAS DONE. WALTERS HAS OFFERED TO SERVE IN ANY ADDITIONAL CAPACITY THE PRESIDENT MIGHT DESIRE; WESSEN SAID. HE ADDED THAT FORD IS CONSIDERING THE OFFER.

WHEN ASKED WHY BUSH DID NOT ASK WALTERS TO REMAIN IN THE CIA AFTER HIS RETIREMENT FROM THE ARMY, WESSEN SAID THE NEW DIRECTOR PLANNED TO BUILD HIS OWN TEAM. "KNOCH IS 'CLEARLY THE MAN GEORGE BUSH WENT WITH,'" THE PRESS SECRETARY SAID. HE SAID BUSH WHO RECOMMENDED KNOCH'S APPOINTMENT TO THE PRESIDENT.

THE WHITE HOUSE REVERSED yesterday's RESIGNATION IN A SINGLE SENTENCE INCLUDED IN AN ANNOUNCEMENT THAT ALSO PLANNED TO NOMINATE KNOCH TO THE POSITION OF ASSOCIATE DEPUTY DIRECTOR.

AT CIA HEADQUARTERS, AN AGENCY SPOKESMAN SAID WALTERS WAS PLANNING TO RETIRE, BUT THAT HE WOULD STAY IN HIS JOB UNTIL ANOTHER IS CONFIRMED BY THE SENATE. THE SPOKESMAN ALSO SAID WALTERS IS RETIRING FROM THE ARMY AFTER 35 YEARS OF SERVICE.

BUT THE SPOKESMAN REFUSED COMMENT ON WHETHER WALTERS' DEPARTURE IS CONNECTED WITH INVESTIGATIONS OF THE CIA OVER THE PAST YEAR OR WITH FORD'S REORGANIZATION OF THE NATION'S INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES. "ON TIMING, I DON'T THINK WE WOULD WANT TO COMMENT ON THAT OR GET INTO A DISCUSSION ON THAT," THE SPOKESMAN SAID.

AS RECENTLY AS FEBRUARY, WALTERS DEFENDED THE RECORD OF THE CIA DESPITE WHAT HE CALLED "SOME OF THE ILLEGALITIES OF THE PAST." HE MADE THE STATEMENT IN A SPEECH TO THE SOUTHERN COUNCIL ON INTERNATIONAL AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS IN ATLANTA.

DESPITE "SOME NUTS, SOME OVERZEALOUS PEOPLE OR SOME PEOPLE WHO EXERCIZED BAD JUDGMENT," WALTERS SAID, "... THE CIA COMES OFF LOOKING PRETTY GOOD."

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